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OFFICE OF CENTRAL REFERENCE  
BIOGRAPHIC REGISTER

PROCESSING CRITERIA

I. Background

In an effort to guide analysts in their selection of biographic materials to process, and, at the same time, help alleviate the storage problems created by our ever-growing biographic holdings, this general statement of processing criteria has been prepared. It is not intended, of course, that the paper should serve as a permanent, inflexible arbiter of all questions concerning processing. New techniques of data storage and retrieval may well make obsolete our present system in the near future, making possible a much more comprehensive coverage than is presently feasible. Even today, exceptions to the rule will have to be made. Different standards must obviously be applied to the USSR, a country of high priority to the intelligence community, than [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] on French citizens:

similarly, the criteria must differ for countries where biographic information is readily available in unclassified

GROUP 1  
Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
declassification

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reference works (e.g., the UK) and those where, due to official secrecy (e.g., Communist China) or primitive conditions (e.g., Niger), data are generally unavailable. Insofar as possible, the same basic standards will be followed by all; when exceptions are required, section chiefs will issue supplementary instructions for particular countries. It is the responsibility of the section chief, acting through his senior analysts, to monitor processing practices in his section, thereby ensuring compliance with division standards and sensitivity to the changing needs of IR requesters.

The bulk of this paper will deal with classes of people to process into or exclude from IR files. Undoubtedly, it could be argued that all persons are of potential intelligence interest. From a practical standpoint, however, the fact that our staff and storage facilities are limited dictates a large measure of selectivity, both quantitative and qualitative. Certain groups (farmers, school teachers, nurses, industrial laborers, etc.) must be eliminated entirely because of the great number of persons falling into such categories and their low priority in terms of intelligence interest. In other

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groups (e.g., artists, writers, editors, athletes, clergymen, labor leaders, economists, businessmen, bankers), coverage must be limited to the outstanding representatives in each field. Only in those categories

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research) should an attempt be made to maintain files on all individuals.

Even in high priority categories, not all biographic items should be put into the files or, if retained, subjected to the same degree of control. Prominent personalities are constantly being reported on, but it is seldom that these reports concern truly significant activities. Appearances at ceremonial functions, routine speeches and writings, and repetitious position identifications often comprise a major portion of the daily mail. Except for rare instances, such information is never used and, moreover, serves only to make the person's file bulky and unwieldy, with the important information obscured by mountains of trivia. The experienced analyst, by judiciously separating the wheat from the chaff, can save both processing time and storage space without detriment to the files. In addition, some bits of biographic information

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are too fragmentary or incomplete to merit retention in the files. The lack of a given name or initials, no indication of position or organizational affiliation, no clues as to a clearly defined field of specialization--any combination of these or other factors would weigh against processing the item.

There may, on the other hand, be instances when excellent material (perhaps a concise, unclassified biographic sketch) will be received in an easily assimilated form (such as on a 5 x 8 card), but on a person of marginal importance. At such times, the analyst may well feel that, although the subject of the report is of lower rank than normally covered, the quality of the information and ease of processing justify waiving the usual criteria and retaining the material in anticipation of future needs. Presumably, such a combination of circumstances will not often occur. On other occasions, data on categories of personnel not generally processed (e.g., membership lists for various organizations, or other compilations and studies) will be retained in a semiprocessed form--filed in the background information folders for that country, or possibly incorporated into the category card file. Specific requirements or requests may also result in a short-term

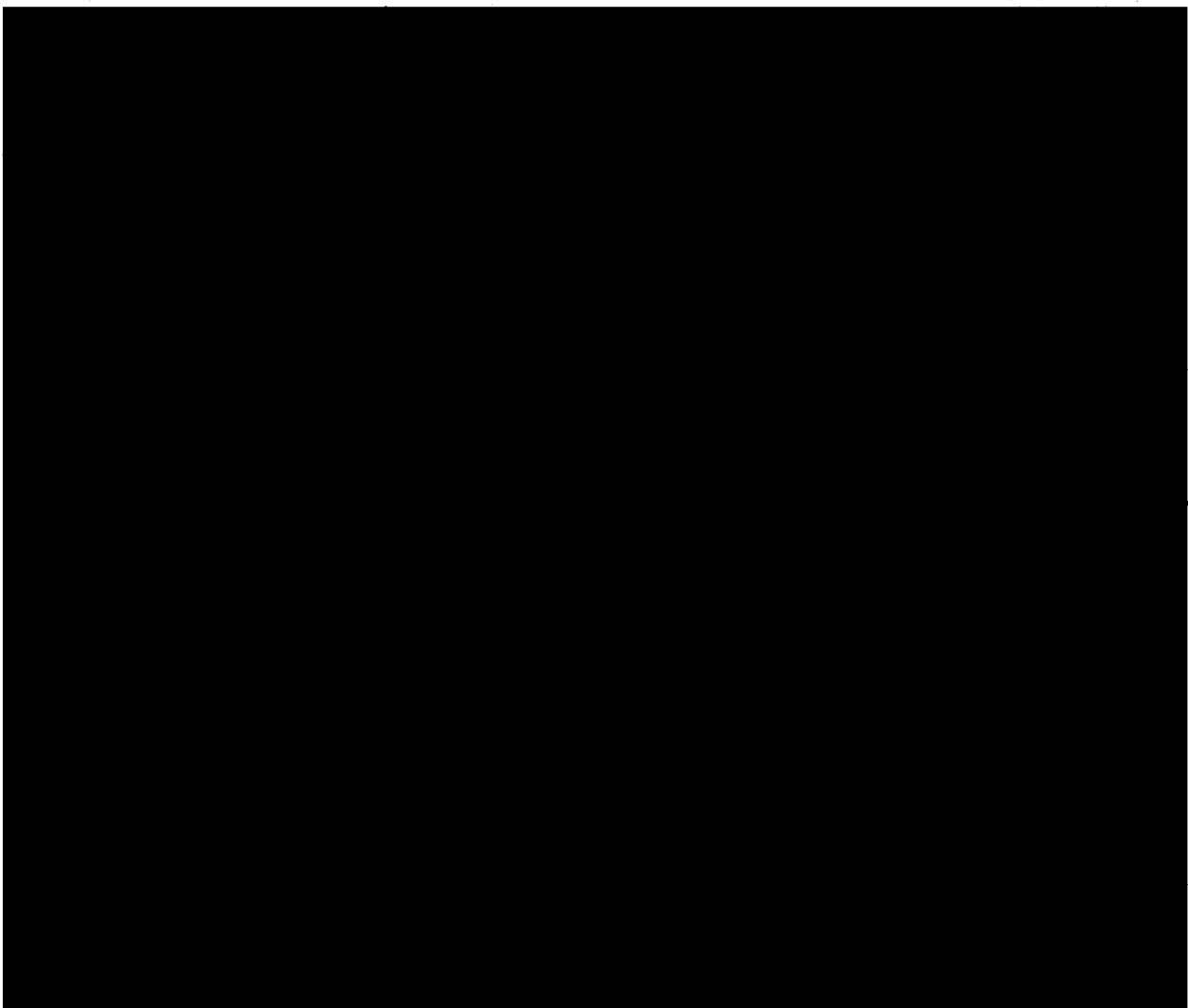
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lowering of processing standards. Interest in cartographers, Afro-Asian students enrolled in bloc universities, or businessmen with contacts in Communist China, for example, might well justify a more comprehensive coverage in these areas, but care should be taken to ensure a return to normalcy once the needs of the requesters are met.

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Approved For Release 2000/09/03 : CIA-RDP84-00951R000400040004-2

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Approved For Release 2000/09/03 : CIA-RDP84-00951R000400040004-2